



News Release

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Locust Fire update: Firefighters manage unplanned and planned ignitions

Fredonia, Ariz., June 23, 2015 – Yesterday's operational period was unique for North Zone fire managers on the Kaibab Plateau. Firefighters were managing unplanned ignitions and planned prescribed fire ignitions simultaneously; the lightning-caused Locust Fire which was determined to be appropriate to manage for protection and resource management objectives, and at the same time, firefighters implemented prescribed fire in the vicinity of Mile-and-a-Half campground.

Although two distinctly different operations with separate management teams, both fires were managed to achieve similar objectives such as returning fire to a fire-adapted ecosystem, reducing fuel loads and the threat of uncharacteristic wildfires in the future while improving overall forest health.

Today the Locust Fire increased slightly in size and is being managed in a predetermined area north of Forest Service Road (FSR) 293, east of FSR 250, south FSR 214, and west of FSR 206, and the Moquitch 4 prescribed fire consumed approximately 90 acres in pine litter and down woody debris fuels.

"Today's accomplishments included extending our black-lining to the west and finishing up prep work along the boundary lines," said Locust Fire Incident Commander James Pettit. "Managing natural ignitions allows us to do some good fuels reduction and help bring the forest back to a healthy state."

Fire managers designed the Moquitch prescribed burn plan with similar goals in mind; to improve forest health and wildlife habitat on the Kaibab Plateau.

"All environmental prescriptions were within the parameters for the Moquitch burn and our objectives were met; however, fire managers decided not to move forward with additional burning until later in the year," said North Zone Fire Management Officer Ed Hiatt. "Success was achieved, public and firefighter safety was achieved, fuels were reduced and adverse impacts to cultural and natural resources were prevented."

In terms of benefits to forest health, prescribed fire and managed fires perform very similar roles. The difference is that managed fires are naturally caused, whereas prescribed fires must be planned, analyzed and approved as outlined by the National Environmental Policy Act. In the case of the 10,000-acre Moquitch Wildlife Habitat Improvement project area, a detailed burn plan was written and approved in 2013, which took several years to develop.

Tomorrow's Locust Fire operational plan is to continue monitoring weather and fire behavior while scouting and preparing for additional blacklining opportunities along the perimeter boundary. Firefighters

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on the Moquitch 4 prescribed fire will continue to monitor the planning area; no additional firing on this project is planned for the near future.

Get fire activity updates and maps 24 hours-a-day:

Fire Information Line: 928-635-8311

Inciweb: inciweb.nwcg.gov

Text Message: text 'follow kaibabnf' to 40404

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